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The Cableman

AN EXCITING PRESENT-DAY ROMANCE

—BY—

WEATHERBY CHESNEY

Supplied Exclusively in Canada by The British & Colonial Press Service, Limited.

Scarborough accepted the mission. She went with him to the door, and stood watching him as he rode away. She has said that she must return to her father, but instead she stood looking out into the night, and a great longing came upon her to call this young man back to her side, and bid him tell his love again. For she loved him. But for one thing, she, too, might have avowed her love, and not been ashamed. But there was something which she did not know of, a secret in her life, which made that impossible; and her heart cried out with a great bitterness against the fate which denied her thus the right to love.

Two years ago she had been a happy and carefree child; then the cloud came suddenly, and darkened everything. She had come out to the islands with her father, who was, so the world said, a fugitive from English justice. But she believed then that the world was wrong.

She had landed in San Miguel, burning with a generous indignation at the injustice of men and full of enthusiasm for the light which she and her father would win together. The cloud which had come over her father, so far as her young life was black, but she believed that it would soon be dissipated. The truth would be known, and meanwhile exile in her father's company was no real hardship to a girl of seventeen.

But two years had passed, and the cloud showed no signs of lifting. Moreover her father, so far as she knew, had made no effort to escape from under its shadow, had been contented to live in the gloom, and seemed to have lost all longing for the light of day and truth.

He had sunk, with seeming content, into the role of confirmed invalid, nursing his gout and spending his days in profitless study of the philosophy of Herbert Spencer—profitless, and even criminal; for meanwhile he did nothing to remove the stain which lay upon his name.

It was this—the mental apathy which disguised itself in fruitless intellectual labor—which Elsa did not understand. It was this which almost, in spite of the loyalty of her love, caused her to doubt. The facts, as she had been told them, were these: The firm of stockbrokers in which her father was the junior partner had failed, and failed disastrously, for its operations had not been honest. Its bankruptcy was fraudulent, and its criminal prosecution followed. The junior partner was in the country at the time, touring in Portugal with his daughter. An attempt was made to secure his return by extradition, but the proceedings broke down upon legal technicalities. He waited in Lisbon until the clamor of the courts at home was over, and then changed his name, and went quietly to the Azores with his daughter. He posed, so long as there was need for posing, as the innocent victim of an unscrupulous partner. He never denied that the bankruptcy was fraudulent, but he asserted that his hands were clean of the fraud. That the active management had been out of his hands, and in those of his senior partner, for the last two months before the crash, was a point which told strongly in his favor. Many people, therefore, whose commercial standing made their opinion of value, believed him, and considered him to be what he said he was, an innocent victim.

There were some, however, who declared that the truth was exactly the opposite. Elsa had known all this, and had waited, at first patiently, but latterly with a growing impatience, for the time when her father should have all the necessary proofs in his hands, and should return to face his accusers, and vindicate his innocence. That he no longer seemed anxious to do so was a thing which she could not understand. But lately the conviction had been slowly forcing itself upon her, that he never meant to go back; and for that weakness she almost began to scorn him.

She was thinking of these things now, as she stood at the door of her father's house in the Azores, and looked out into the darkness of the night—darkness no blacker than the despair that filled her. She stretched out her hands, and cried aloud: "Horace, I love you! And even when you tell me of your love, I have to lie to you, and play a part!"

A great sob shook her. She turned, and went slowly to her room. Her father watched her, and was waiting; but she could not go to him to-night.

CHAP. XXIII

A Martyr to Gout

"You quite understand, my dear," said Mr. Page, signing to his daughter to shift the cushions, so that his left foot should rest more easily. "You are to bring me a careful description of every member of this circus troupe. You are a keen observer, and it is essential that you should make the best use of your talent now. It won't be an easy task, because you will have to penetrate the veils and mists and describe the humdrum being underneath."

"How am I to do that?" asked Elsa, and added, as she gave a caressing pat to the cushion which supported her father's gouty foot; "Is that more comfortable?"

"Yes, thank you, dear. How are you to do it? Why, observe them when they are performing. Speak to some of them, if you can. The members of a travelling circus are not generally exclusive, and in a foreign country particularly they will welcome advantages made by those who speak their own language."

"But I can't go and begin a casual conversation!" she objected. "Even in a foreign country, people would think that queer."

"You can't," said her father, "but young Scarborough can. Tell him you are interested in the people, that you think their life romantic, and that you would like to see it a little closer."

Part of her reluctance came from the fact that she was going to Scarborough's company. That would have been a pleasure to her a day or two ago; but now, when the part of the spy had to be played, there was pain to her in purpose. Besides, though she did not yet admit the fact to herself, her trust in her father, absolute hitherto, was beginning to be subject to qualifications. "Father," she said at length, "how much longer is all this going on? When are we going to return to England and be known by our own name again?"

"When we can do so with perfect safety," said Mr. Page. "You can't imagine that I enjoy living in hiding, and that I have willingly separated myself from your mother for all this time!"

"What is my mother doing? She never writes to me."

"And rarely to me," said her father. "Letters are not safe. But she is working for us, you may be sure, watching over the safety of her husband and daughter, and waiting anxiously for the day when we can return to her. It was she who sent us the cablegram."

"Danger—circus," said Elsa. "Father, what is the danger?"

"I don't know," said Mr. Page. "When you return from Ponta Delgada I hope that you will give me the information that will enable me to answer your question. My dear, as you know, I have enemies."

"The accusation of fraud upon you?"

"Mr. Page smiled. "Yes, but in connection with myself. 'Yes,' he said, 'those and others. When I know of my enemies is a member of Val B. Montague's circus troupe. I know what the danger is for which I must be ready. I think that the meaning of your mother's cable, 'I wish she had taken the risk of being a little more explicit. Ah, someone has jumped off a bicycle at the front door. An invalid's ears grow sharp, and I heard the crunch of gravel.'"

"It's Mr. Scarborough," said Elsa, from the window.

"Then, my dear, I won't delay you. You know what your work is—do it as thoroughly as you can. Our safety may depend on the accuracy with which you remember a name on an arm or a scar on a forehead!"

Elsa thought involuntarily of the complete answer which her father had given her when he had all the charges against him. "Our safety!" she cried. "How can it be threatened?"

"Little girl," said Mr. Page quickly, "it can be, and is, or your mother would not have sent that message. Now, there is one thing more. Do your work thoroughly, but don't delay unnecessarily at the accuracy with which you remember a name on an arm or a scar on a forehead!"

Elsa turned to him with a sharp cry. "Father! why do you say that?"

"He was a prisoner in his chair, chained by the leg, in the grip of his foe, the gout. How was it possible that he should not be here when she returned. Unless he meant—unless!—was the danger something which threatened not liberty only, but life?"

Mr. Page smiled at her alarm. "I don't mean that I shall be dead, my dear," he said; "I do not expect to move from this chair, or at any rate from this room, till you return. But we must prepare for everything—even for things which, at first sight, appear to be impossible. And so I say again, if I am not here when you return, look in my desk, and in the second small drawer on the left you will find a paper which will tell you what to do next. Hadn't you better go now? You've got men, even the most devoted, don't like to be kept waiting."

Acting upon a sudden impulse, Elsa bent down, and kissed her father. The action was the more remarkable because she was not a girl who was given to showing her feelings in this way. Then she ran quickly from the room.

Page rested back in his chair with a smile. The actress had surprised him, and, curiously enough, it made him uncomfortable.

"I believe my little girl is beginning to suspect me at last," he muttered.

He waited till the sounds on the gravel below were off. Then, as though he had forgotten all about his gouty foot, he rose, and went to the window. He used no stick, and he did not even limp; the gout, like many other things in his life, was a lie.

He watched the two bicyclists till a turn in the road hid them from sight. "That young man is a good sort, I believe," he said; "but I wonder whether he would cry off, or stick to her, if he heard the truth about her father?"

Then, a moment afterwards, with something like a moan, he added: "And when she knows the whole truth—my God! will she stick to me?"

The malefactor had one virtue at least. He loved his daughter with a love that was ready to sacrifice all for her. For her sake he was about to undertake a task in which he had little hope that he would succeed; little hope, indeed, that when she returned he would be alive to welcome her.

(To be Continued.)

DON'T SAY WORD: IT'S SLANDER

Doctor's Wife Fined for Calling Teacher a Suffragette.

Cologne, March 20.—For calling a woman school principal a "suffragette," the wife of a physician in a neighboring village was convicted and fined on a charge of slander, according to the Cologne Gazette.

The offence was committed in the course of a quarrel over the punishment of the school principal of the physician's daughter.

The complainant in supporting the charge before the court argued that the suffragettes had shown themselves to be scarcely normal. Educated people, she said, were enraged against them owing to their outrages, and nobody would entrust children to her if she were a suffragette.

The defendant refused to apologize and declared that the teacher had acted like a suffragette. She was thereupon ordered to pay a fine.

At Winnipeg a woman suffering from leprosy, who came from Saskatchewan, has been sent to the Lazaretto at St. John, N. B. She is married and has three children.

Charles J. Jones, of Ottawa, was found dead in his room at a Prescott hotel. He fell into icy water the day before.

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Get a small bottle anywhere, just to try it—Apply a little in the nostrils and instantly your clogged nose and stopped up air passages of the head will open; you will breathe freely; dullness and headache disappear. By morning the catarrh, cold in head or catarrhal sore throat will be gone.

End such misery now! Get the small bottle of Ely's Cream Balm at any drug store. This sweet, fragrant balm dissolves by the heat of the nostrils; penetrates and heals the inflamed, swollen membrane which lines the nose, head and throat; clears the air passages, stops nasty discharges and a feeling of cleansing, soothing relief comes immediately.

Don't lay awake to-night struggling for breath, with head stuffed, nostrils closed, hawking and blowing. Catarrh or a cold, with its running nose, foul mucous dropping into the throat, and raw dryness is distressing but truly needless.

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